

Icebreaker Ideas

Here are a few ideas for introductory activities that use WebCT tools. Instead of simply asking students to introduce themselves, some scaffolding is built to help engage students.

1. Ask students to use eight nouns to describe themselves to the class.

"I view the eight-noun introduction assignment as important to establishing a climate within the virtual classroom. From reading the postings of students in the class, I became acquainted with them as individuals much more quickly than occurs in the conventional classroom. In conventional classes by mid-semester, I typically know a comparable amount about some of the more vocal students: however, those more reticent tend not to share much information about themselves, or even to talk much in the conventional class. The quiet student cannot hide in an electronic classroom, i.e., being present in class is demonstrated by participating in the discussion." – from an online student

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks each student to pick 8 nouns to best describe himself/herself and explain why. The instructor can also ask students to describe them with adjective words if you like.

2. Ask your students to describe themselves and their environment.

*"An icebreaker I have used successfully with academic participants is to ask them to tell me about **where they are** as they type. This is a step up on 'Tell me a little about yourself'. It works nicely with academics."— from one online faculty*

In this activity, the instructor posts a message in Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks the student to describe themselves and their environment.

EXAMPLE:

Subject: A little bit about me and where I am right now...

Congratulations! You've found the Self-Introduction forum. This message will start off (I hope) a series of self-introductory postings from everyone in this course.

- 1. Please tell us your preferred name and something (briefly) about what you do at Webster.*
- 2. Please describe the room or environment around you as you type your message. e.g. Are you in your office or at home? What does the room look like? What can you see through the window/s? What's on your desk?*

As for myself, everyone calls me Maggie. Right now, I'm in my work office, with my new 2001 calendars on my walls and some WebCT Conference brochures on my desk next to the phone (anyone want one?).

I also have a copy of Anthony Bourdain's Kitchen Confidential on my desk to send to my nephew in Tasmania who is an apprentice cook. There's a dissertation to send to someone, papers and bits to attend to, printouts of some of the WebCT screens to help me as I rewrite some other areas in this workshop. Looking through my windows, there's not much happening...it's a cloudy gray day through the trees and lawns near the Humanities buildings. It's very quiet...

3. Ask students to describe themselves by naming a film actor/actress that they look like and a recent film that features the actor/actress.

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks students to describe themselves by naming a film actor that they look like and a recent film that features the actor. The instructor can also ask the person to send a URL where the class can see a picture of the actor/actress.

4. Ask students to post their favorite photos, write a short description of themselves, and tell the class one unique or unusual thing about themselves.

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks students to:

- 1) post their favorite photos, particularly of pet dogs and cats.
- 2) tell the class:

- Where do they work
- Where do they live
- Hobbies
- Reasons why they are taking this course

- 3) tell the class one thing they are unusual.

5. Ask students to post two lies and one truth about themselves.

Each student and the instructor have to post two lies and one truth about themselves. After they are posted, everyone tries to figure out what is truth and what isn't. This activity is fun and generates a lot of discussion and community building.

6. Ask students to describe themselves and share one favorite motto or line of poetry.

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks students to:

- 1) tell the class:
 - Where do they work
 - Where do they live
 - Hobbies
 - Reasons why they are taking this course
- 2) tell the class one favorite motto or line of poetry.

7. Ask students to build a student homepage.

This idea is to create a selection of student homepages for the class. Students will use “Students Homepage” tool in WebCT to build a simple homepage for themselves. They can write short paragraphs to introduce them to the class, post a self-photo, and add URL links, etc. This activity motivates students to be creative in introducing themselves to the class.

8. Ask students to pick a website they like for personal use and explain in one or two sentences why.

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks each student to share one website he/she likes to use and explain in one or two sentences why. This activity gives some insight into students’ interests.

9. Ask students to post 3 hyperlinks that would describe their profession or interest.

In this activity, the instructor posts a message onto Discussions area. In the message, the instructor asks students to post 3 hyperlinks that would best describe their profession or interest. Other class members have to guess what this it. This activity is fun and gives some insights into students’ interests.